

INTRODUCTORY TALK

J. Stephen Watkins, Consulting Engineer

At the meeting of the American Association of State Highway Officials which I attended in September, 1947, in New York one of the speakers on the program—a commissioner of highways of an eastern state and an eminent consulting engineer—made a significant statement which was underscored in my mind. He prefaced his remarks at an Open Forum discussion by reference to the beautiful little story which was written by an American writer many years ago. It was concerning *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow* written by Washington Irving. This story was laid in the New York country along the Hudson River near Tarrytown. You will recall that the hero of this story was Rip Van Winkle who after possibly a little over-indulgence in ale at the town inn wandered back into the hills and slept for twenty years. When he awoke and returned to the town, great changes had taken place. He looked for the old familiar sign over the door at the inn, which originally bore the likeness of King George III of England; but it was gone. Instead there was the likeness of a man named General George Washington with the title of President of United States under his name. The point of this story, said the speaker, is not that Rip Van Winkle slept for twenty years. The point is that he slept entirely through the American Revolution.

In these United States and in our Commonwealth of Kentucky in the past thirty years, a great revolution has taken place—a revolution in transportation which has brought with it a complete change of habits, living conditions, and social habits of our people. Those of us who have not been alive to this situation have literally slept through a revolution.

Thirty years ago, the families of wealth in the city of Louisville lived along the car lines in the downtown area in St. James Court, South Third and South Fourth Streets, and along the car lines in the eastern section which was then just commencing to develop in this city. Then came the automobile into general usage. The car lines have been removed; the street cars are no more.

This transportation facility has been replaced by bus transportation, but the prevalent automobile has become the main transportation facility for the majority of the people. Residential building has extended far beyond the city limits. The parking problem in the downtown area has become an acute problem. Large stores are commencing to decentralize because of these conditions. In cities, such as Louisville the engineers are thinking along the line of providing main arterial express ways so that the people can get to the heart of the city with the least possible delay. The parking problem will remain a vital problem even after the Express Way is installed.

Better highways have taken away from the small county seat towns a large portion of the business they formerly enjoyed and have moved this business into the larger centers. Business has moved from the country to the county seat towns, and in the rural areas which are now enjoying good roads, the country store is become almost extinct. Families living many miles from the county seat and from the railroad now enjoy the facilities of modern highway transportation, radio, electric lights, and all of the modern conveniences they formerly could not have had in those communities.

This revolution in highway transportation has literally brought with it a revolution in living and in social customs.

There are great problems that face our Commonwealth today in highway transportation. The motor vehicle has been developed beyond the capacity and adequacy of our highways. A recent report of the Citizens Committee for Kentucky on long range highway planning—which I had the honor of appointing a year and a half ago under the able leadership of Charles W. Lovell as chairman—indicates that a very careful study has been made of this problem as it affects our Commonwealth. The report of this Committee issued March, 1948, gives an estimate to bring our Federal aid and state maintained system of primary and secondary highways to adequate standard of \$366,000,000. It further shows the estimated cost improving the rural or class three roads to adequate standards of \$167,000,000 making a total of \$533,000,000.

Kentucky now has a highway fund from all sources including Federal aid totaling more than \$50,000,000 per year; but to

maintain a system that has already been built and to improve our entire system as outlined in the report of the Citizens Committee will require many years of intelligent planning and efficient administration of our highway program.

The task assigned to me for this meeting really includes the introduction of the next speaker and not a speech on the ~~high~~ way problems. However, since all of our minds at this Highway Conference are centered on the tremendous problem which faces Kentucky in building an adequate system of highways, I could not forego the opportunity to mention some of these vital points.

Our speaker on this occasion is an eminent engineer who has been associated with the University of Kentucky for many years as head of the Department of Mining and Metallurgy in the College of Engineering. He has done an outstanding job at the University and is held in high esteem by the mining and metallurgical industries throughout Kentucky. As busy as he may have been with his routine tasks at the University for the past fifteen years, he has devoted a great amount of time toward the upbuilding of the engineering profession generally in our Commonwealth.

He was one of those who assisted in the formation of the Kentucky Society of Professional Engineers in January, 1934, and was elected its first secretary-treasurer. He has been re-elected year after year and has continued to serve in that official capacity as an officer of the Kentucky Society. It was through the influence of the Kentucky Society that our present registration law for engineers was passed in 1938. This gentleman was appointed on the original State Registration Board, became its secretary, has been reappointed as his term expires, and has continued to fill his position to the present time. He has done a great work for the profession in this state; and it is an honor and great privilege for me to introduce to you Professor C. S. Crouse of the College of Engineering of the University of Kentucky.